

INTERESTING EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF MIDWAY RELATED
BY HENRY VAN WAGONER, A PIONEER OF MIDWAY, TO
DOROTHY HOLMES ON FEB. 22, 1933.

In about the year 1860 the first settlers came to this valley. John H. Van Wagoner came from Provo and settled in the lower Settlement in 1860's. He came from New Jersey and settled in Provo in 1852. He built the first Grist Mill in this (Heber) valley in 1861 in the Lower Settlement. It stood where Fred Price's house now stands on Snake Creek. It was called the Woods Farm then. At this time the following families were living in the Lower Settlement: David Wood, Oscar Wood, Bill Wood, Jesse McCarroll, Joseph McCarroll, David Van Wagoner, James and David Provost, Joseph Murdock, Mark Smith, Sidney H. Epperson, Jeremiah Robey, John Watkins, George Wardle (who came to Salt Lake in 1847 with the first pioneers), Herbert Orsler, Fred and Stephen Bee, Andrew Hamilton, Isaac Bowman, Attewall Wootton, Simon Hickenbottom, Thomas Perry, the Bronsons, and perhaps other.

The upper settlement was located at the mouth of Snake Creek Canyon. The early settlers came there about the same time (1860). The first saw mill in this valley was built by Peter Shirts on Snake Creek at the mouth of the canyon. It contained an old up and down saw. It was later purchased and operated by Henry Coleman, Sr. John H. Van Wagoner worked in it for some time.

The first families of the Upper Settlement were: George Bonner, Peter Shirts, David Van Wagoner, who built a shingle mill at the mouth of the canyon and operated it for some time. It was located about where the power plant now stands. John Huber and David Provost ran the shingle mill. John Huber took up land there and after the move to Midway his family moved back up and have lived there ever since.

In about the year 1865, a company of United States Soldiers camped in what is now known as Soldier Hollow. It was named because of the Camp.

In 1866, the people received instructions from Pres. Brigham Young to move together into larger settlements for protection against the Indians. The two settlements moved to what is now our public square and built a fort. The houses were built one right next to the other all around the square. The space in the center was used for the cattle at night. The cattle were kept in one big herd and were driven to the mountains to feed in the day time by men and boys who guarded them. They were brought back at night and guarded within the square. The people in Midway were not bothered very much by Indians. They lost a few horses but they had no trouble to speak of.

In 1868 the crickets came and completely destroyed all of the crops. There was no harvest that year and the people had a very hard time to get food. The next year the crickets came again and the sea gulls came and devoured them. The seagulls would fill up on crickets then go and drink water and vomit the crickets into the stream and then return to the fields for more. They kept this up for days until the crickets were done away with. The Indians caught the crickets and mashed their heads, dried them and made soup out of them. Simon Schnietter, during the grasshopper time when there was very little harvest went up Snake Creek and cut the Mountain grass with a scythe and hauled it down on a two wheeled cart with a drag rack to feed his cattle during the winter.

Between 1880 and 1885 John Watkins built a saw mill on what is now called the mill flat at the Snake Creek Tunnel. This furnished employment for many young men. Some of the loggers were: Orson Lance, James W. Provost, Wm. Van Wagoner, Henry Van Wagoner, David W. Provost, Milo Lance, Henry Watkins, Edward Watkins, Casper Sulser, Charles I. Bronson, Wm. Bonner, George Bunnell, James Gurr, Adam Empey, John Sulser, Everus Bronson, Peter Alplanalp, Christian Burgner. This logging was all done with ox team.

The pioneers had to clear the land and kill the snakes. The Snake Den, up by Zweifel's place, was literally lined with Rattle Snakes. The men would take a little pole with a hook in the end and pull the snake out by the head, then kill it and cut a slit down its back and take out the oil. The oil was very valuable. It was put in small bottles and used as a rubbing oil to cure earache, croup, stiff joints, etc.

The houses were all built of logs until after the saw mill was built, then they started making frame houses. The furniture was all slab furniture except what some of the pioneers had brought with them from the east. Mr. and Mrs. John H. Van Wagoner brought a set of chairs with them from New Jersey.

The pioneers heated their homes and cooked with sagebrush fire in a fire place. In front of the fire place was a bake oven which was used for baking bread, etc. The other cooking was done over the open fire place in kettles and griddles hung over the open fire.

Some of the homes had wooden floors and others had just dirt floors. Most of them had dirt roofs. Sometimes the rain would leak through until they had to put pans on the beds to catch the mud and water. The beds were built in the wall with three logs across the room. Some of the members of the family would sleep on top and another bed was made underneath for others. Most of the beds were equipped with straw ticks. The house contained just one room to house large families.

Food was very scarce at times. Potatoes and bread made up their principal diet. They would sometimes gather garlies and make garlies. Game was plentiful but weapons were scarce. There were lots of fish and the boys caught them with a string and a pin hook. They could sometimes kill wild chickens with rocks.

Some people had to tell time by the sun because they had no clocks. They didn't have matches. They had to make their fires with a flint rock. Their homes were all lighted with candles or a light made by putting a rag in a pan of grease and lighting it. Some of the children had to go to school bare footed.

The first schoolhouse in Midway was a log building which stood just west of the spot now occupied by the Second Ward L.D.S. Chapel. School was held there for two or three years with Simon Hickenbottom as teacher. The seats were made of slabs with peg legs. The children when they became thirsty had to go outside and lie down by the ditch to drink. The books they used were the Wilson Readers. They wrote on slates. The next school was the Post Office Building. The school was used for dances, meetings, and all public gatherings. Attewall Wootton, Sr. was the teacher. Mrs. Sarah Woods, C.I. Brongon's aunt, taught summer school in what is now the grainary on the place of Wm. Van Wagoner, Sr.

Sidney H. Epperson was the first Bishop of the Midway Ward. Alvah Alexander was the next, David Van Wagoner the next, John Watkins the next, and Jacob Probst the next after the wards divided. (Jacob Probst is still bishop in the Second Ward.)

The first store in Midway was built by David Van Wagoner. It stood just west of where Guy Coleman's house now stands. It was a little frame building. Before this time all of the provisions were hauled by ox teams and a few horse teams from Heber, Provo, and Salt Lake.

The first blacksmith shop was owned and operated by John Davis. It was located in the public square just west of where the Second Ward Chapel now stands.

The German Hall was built about 1875. It was built for a dance hall and music house by a company of men consisting of Andrew Burgener, Christian Burgener, Peter Alplanalp, and others. Andrew Burgener was one of the best musicians in the state at that time. The first band organized here was a martial band. The members of this band were: Mark Smith, Jesse McCarroll, Jr., Jesse McCarroll, Sr. Joseph Jacobs, and David Provost. The next band was the German Band organized by Andrew Burgener.

In about 1888 David Van Wagoner built the Van Wagoner Hall which stood between the places now occupied by the homes of David Van Wagoner, Jr. and Clark Bronson. It was built and used for an amusement hall for many years.

The many canyons in our mountains were named by our pioneers. Pole Canyon up above the cemetery was so named because of the poles that were taken out of there by the pioneers. Just north of that is Sid's Canyon, named after Sidney H. Epperson, the first man to haul wood out of there. Indian Spring west of the cemetery was so named because an Indian died and was buried there many years ago. Lime Canyon was so named because the first lime was burned there by Allen Martin. Lime Canyon is just west of Schneitter's resort. Snake Creek was so named because of the great many snakes. The Twist, called Jacobs Twist, was so named because Mr. Jacob was the first to haul wood from there.

Dr. Gerber had a ranch in the Upper Settlement. He was the first doctor to settle in this valley. He came in about 1862 from Switzerland. Pine Canyon and Mahogany Ridge are so named because of the kind of wood growing there.

The pioneers had their own forms of amusement. They held public dances in which they enjoyed dancing, the quadrilles and other round dances which we call old-fashioned or old time dances. They also went to lectures delivered twice a week by a Professor Clegg, an English Phonologist who settled in Heber. The twenty fourth of July was always celebrated with a parade of the Marshall band around the public square.

Some other school teachers that were not mentioned above were: Mr. Forbes, from American Fork, Mr. Nugent from up the river, and Mr. Felps, a Civil War Veteran, who had been wounded five times.

These items are very interesting and were taken from the mouth of a real pioneer. Mr. Van Wagoner told these from his own experiences. He was born May 22, 1861 and died July 27, 1933 after living in Midway for 70 years.

Uncle Henry played the Banjo and had Lure Van Wagoner dance when a little girl. Henry taught her to cook on the stove and play a tin flute.

(Typed by NaDene S. Probst on
July 5, 1953.)
For Donna Rae VanWagoner Sweet)

much solace and comfort throughout many years with their beautiful singing.

Of all the musical leaders in Midway, Clarence H. Probst is perhaps the greatest. Under his direction many operettas and choral concerts have been presented, using Midway townspeople for all the productions.

In 1937 Mr. Probst directed "Robin Hood," and then presented "In Old Vienna" in 1940. He provided a concert for Midway Harvest Days in 1952 and in 1953 planned and presented "The Festival of Music" for the first Swiss Days celebration. His high standards of musical production have added much to the quality of singing in Midway.

Some who have taken an active part in his choruses and operettas have included Samuel Burgi, George Burgi, Frank Epperson, Albert Kohler, Reed Kohler, Karl Probst, Clarence Probst, Thomas Schneitter, Clyde Pyper, Roy Huffaker, Rulon Huntington, Calvin Huffaker, Joseph Jorgensen, Francis Probst, Nephi Probst, Grant Remund, John Joost, Dean Zenger, George Johnson, Lowell Johnson, Max Johnson, June Van Wagoner, Ruth Coleman, Marjoria Provost, Joan Larson, Beth Probst, Dorothy Kohler, Ardell Pugh, Jennie Johnson, Eloise Kohler, Margaret Kohler, Dawnette K. Adamson, Georgia Huffaker, Joan Van Wagoner, Alder and June Boss Tatton.

Individuals who deserve mention in Midway's history of singing include Ida Haueter, Vera Epperson, Leah and Louise Kohler, Leda Smith, Ida Kohler, Simon and Lillie Epperson, Lona Burgener Kelly, Stella Hair Luke, Mrs. Dorothy Kohler, Mrs. Mary C. Probst, Mrs. Ardell Pugh, Francis Probst, John Joost, Marjorie Provost and Roy Huffaker, Samuel and Lacy Burgi, Jennie Pyper Johnson, organist for more than 40 years, and the family of Albert and Elsie Kohler, Alvah, Eloise, Barbara, Margaret, Elizabeth, Marion and Ann Lynn, all of whom made musical contributions. Samuel Burgi was chorister in the auxiliary organization of Midway 1st Ward for 25 years.

One of the highlights in Midway musical achievements came on January 20 and 21, 1960, when the entire community cooperated to present an original musical show, "Midway to Heaven." Composed and presented entirely by local talent, the show received statewide acclaim and has since been performed at the annual Swiss Day celebration.

The music was composed by John Ernest Kuhni. Orma Whitaker Wallengren wrote the words to the songs and the dialogue. Scenery was painted by Ferrin Whitaker. Those responsible for the successful production included Clarence H. Probst, musical director; Roy Huffaker, business manager; Lethe Tatge, drama director; Verna Berg, stage and costumes; Wanda Simmons, choreographer; June Tatton, accompanist; Robert Welch, make-up; Leo Luke, properties and Felt, Silver and Walton, sound and lighting.

Another important aspect of music in Midway has been its martial bands. The first band was organized when the settlement was in its



Two of the most popular musicians in Midway's earlier years were Henry Van Wagoner and his sister Emily Van Wagoner Murdock, shown here in a traditional pose.

infancy, and band music has continued as a popular entertainment feature since that time.

Members of the first martial band were Henry Van Wagoner, fife; David Provost Sr., snare drum; Luke Provost Sr., bass drum; William (Lime Kiln Bill) Van Wagoner, snare drum; Ambrose Potter, snare; Doc McCarrell, flagman. Later Mark Smith, Jesse McCarrell Sr., Jesse McCarrell Jr. and Joseph Jacobs were added as members.

Henry Van Wagoner, known also as an outstanding banjo player, directed the band, and continued his leadership for more than 50 years. A 1918 band notice lists Mr. Van Wagoner as director, with members including Amos Epperson, fife; Lawrence and Emery Epperson, Ellis Epperson and David E. Provost, drums and Charley Van Wagoner, flag bearer. David E. Provost recently revived the martial band for the Midway Harvest and Swiss Days celebrations.

The first brass band in Midway was organized by Andreas Burgener, an LDS Church convert from Faulensee, Switzerland. Mr. Burgener studied music in his native land and became a bugler in the Swiss Army and bandmaster of the Swiss Military Band. When he joined the Church and decided to come to America he was advised by Church missionaries to bring musical instruments with him, which he did. The three cornets, one bugle, two alto horns and one baritone which he brought

with him in 1874 quickly became the nucleus of a brass band when he arrived in Midway to make his first American home.

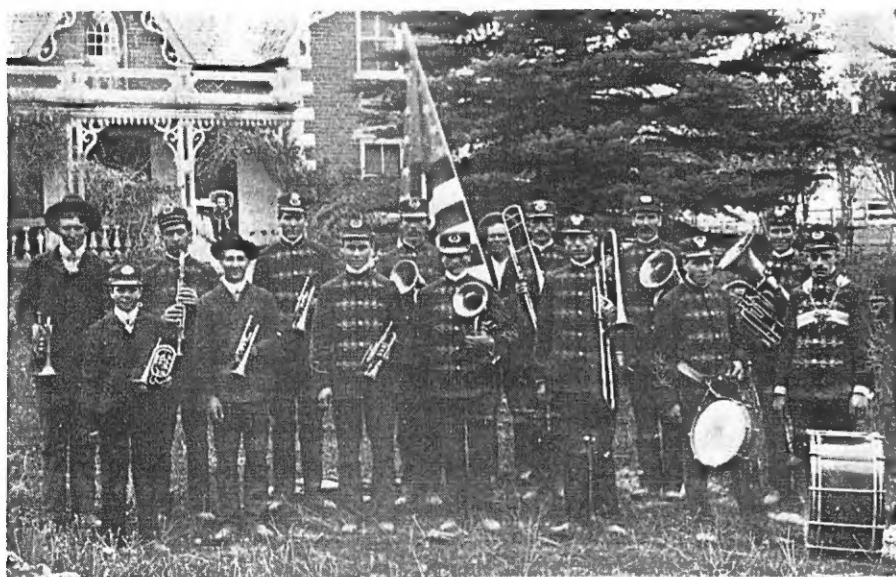
Members of Mr. Burgener's band included Peter Abplanalp, S. J. Schneitter, Joseph and Conrad Abegglen and John and Christian Burgener and Christian Burgi.

The thrilling music of this band made the holidays and celebrations unforgettable. People came from all parts of the valley to enjoy Mr. Burgener's early morning parades, patriotic marches, American and Swiss selections as well as many of his own arrangements.

Another brass band was organized later by Robert Krebs. Members included Fred Sonderegger, George Burgener, John Burgener, F. O. Haueter, Fred Kohler, Charles Bigler, Edward Burgener, Arnold Burgener, John Sonderegger, Henry Zenger, Alma Burgener and William Bigler.

The third band to gain favorable recognition was organized in 1898 by Arnold Burgener, son of the old Swiss bandmaster.

Known as the Midway Independent Brass Band, this group achieved a favorable reputation in many parts of the state. They played on all holiday occasions and frequently gave concerts in neighboring counties. Members of this band included Will Bigler, Walter Burgener, John Sonderegger, Fred O. Haueter, Arnold Burgener, Will Buhler, Eph Mohl-



The Third Midway Brass Band posing for a picture on November 28, 1899. On the first row, left to right, are Walter Burgener, Fred O. Haueter, Will Buehler, Frank Abplanalp, Peter Boss, Laurence Epperson and Bennie Clark. Shown on the second row are Will Bigler, John Sonderegger, Arnold Burgener, Ephraim Mohlman, Simon Epperson, William Mathews, Fred Burgener and Henry Zenger. The little girls on the porch are Lillie Watkins and Pansy Bonner.



The Robert Krebs Boys Band, shown here in an 1898 photograph, includes, front row, left to right, Wallace Epperson, Elmer Burgener, Clarence Shields, Jess Bigler, Rolland Krebs, David Provost, Emery Epperson and Ellis Epperson. Back row: Charles Van Wagoner, Charles Bonner, Walter Burgener, Tracy Watkins, Roswell Blood, Nephi Sulser, Edward Burgener, Amos Epperson, Robert Krebs, leader, and Ernest Sonderegger, Jr.

man, Frank Abplanalp, Simon Epperson, Will Matthews, Peter Boss, Fred Burgener, Lawrence Epperson, Henry Zenger and Bennie Clark.

At the same time as the Independent band was flourishing another group was being formed, including many young men. Robert Krebs, who possessed a great musical talent, and also a love for boys, organized a junior band that became known throughout the state. Members of this band included Wallace Epperson, Elmer Burgener, Clarence Shields, Jess Bigler, Rolland Krebs, David Provost, Emery Epperson, Ellis Epperson, Charles Van Wagoner, Charles Bonner, Walter Burgener, Tracy Watkins, Roswell Blood, Nephi Sulser, Edward Burgener, Amos Epperson, Ernest E. Sonderegger.

A very promising band was organized in 1913 under the direction of Fred O. Haueter. The group became very popular, but when the nation entered World War I many of the band members answered service calls and the band soon ended. Members of the band during its four years existence included Ellis Epperson, Walter Burgener, David Provost, Karl Probst, Clarence Probst, John Burgener, Bernard Kennah, Delbert Ross, Henry Zenger, William Haueter, Edward Burgener, Jess Bigler, William Bigler, Alva Ross, Reed Alder, and Ernest E. Sonderegger.

In more recent years there have been bands directed by Karl Probst, Clarence Probst and El Roy Van Wagoner, but the dominant position once enjoyed by the brass bands is becoming a thing of the past.

Orchestra music for dances has also been a lively part of the Mid-